

A Threat to Tie Up the Subway, Elevated and Surface Car Lines of New York

To the People of New York:

New York is again threatened with a street railroad strike, this time involving every subway, elevated and surface car line in the city. It is important that the public know now the issues involved.

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Officers of the Union have been empowered to call an immediate strike unless the Subway and Elevated agree to cancel contracts made with over 8,000 of their Employees:

Organizer W. B. Fitzgerald, of the Amalgamated Union, in Sunday's newspapers publicly avowed a purpose—failing compliance with his demands—to

"Paralyze the transit of New York as it has never been paralyzed before."

We have agreed to meet, this morning, a committee, headed by Amalgamated Union officers, but representing only a *minority* of our men. The overwhelming majority of our men have already formed a Brotherhood of their own.

At the meeting this morning we shall repeat our determination to stand by our agreements with more than 8,000 of our Employees.

The contracts with our Employees which we are asked to annul give the men shorter hours and a substantial increase in pay—aggregating some \$1,250,000 per annum—the third increase by this Company since January 1st, 1916.

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The schedules of increased pay and shorter hours embodied in the individual agreements, before submission to the men, had been considered and agreed upon at conferences between Company Officers and Committees of Employees.

Those Employees' Committees had been elected at secret ballot on Thursday, August 17th, by 9,800 men out of 11,000 eligible to vote.

Conferences between the Company and the Committees thus elected took place before any other committee, union or otherwise, had presented any requests whatsoever.

The Employees' Committees so elected made various requests and, after full discussion, the increases in pay and reduction of hours set forth in the agreements were accepted as satisfactory by the men's representatives.

In the call for election of Employees' representatives the men had been asked to choose fellow-employees in whom they had the "utmost confidence," who should be "empowered" to speak for them.

The Company would have been justified, therefore, in accepting agreements by these representatives with the new and improved conditions of employment as expressing the views of the Employees collectively.

THE ISSUE

There is just one issue involved in the proposed threat to tie up the street railways of New York:

Shall the Interborough Company be compelled to cancel and annul contracts, creating improved conditions of employment, voluntarily entered into between the Company and more than 8,000 of its Employees?

In order that there could be no mistake and that the Company might know definitely that the new schedules were satisfactory to the men, a contract was prepared for submission to each man individually.

No man was asked to sign by any one selected by the Company, or by any man with authority over others. Submission of the agreements to the individual men was handled entirely by elected representatives of an overwhelming majority of the men.

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Those contracts give substantial benefits to the men and were signed by more than two-thirds of all our Employees for reasons good and sufficient to them.

But representatives of the Union now demand that we not only deal in the usual way with their committee—representing a minority of the men, but that we recall and cancel agreements already made with over 8,000 men.

In other words, an overwhelming majority of Employees may not do what is agreeable to them without threat of strike—with its invariable suggestions of intimidations, coercion and violence.

If this means anything, it involves an attempted invasion of the fundamental right of freedom of contract guaranteed to every citizen by the Constitution of the United States, a right here exercised by more than 8,000 of this Company's employees.

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The public should know of another aspect of the pending situation.

In the resolution empowering the Union officers to call a strike on the Subway and Elevated, the "co-operation" of the "Green" surface car lines was solicited.

Such "co-operation" means a sympathetic strike, a fact openly avowed in Sunday's newspapers by Organizer Fitzgerald in saying:

"We will tie up every car line between Yonkers and Coney Island if the Interborough does not accede to our demands."

There are no questions pending between the "Green" car lines and their Employees, except those in process of orderly adjustment. The New York Railways Company is adhering strictly to its agreement of August 7th, also signed by the Union officers, and underwritten by the Mayor and Chairman Straus.

The threat to tie up the whole transit system is made in face of the clause in the agreement covering the "green" car lines, providing that "ALL disputes that may arise between the Company and its Employees in the future shall be submitted to arbitration."

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We sincerely hope that there will be no strike.

We believe our position is sound. We know from the voluntary signatures to these agreements that the rank and file of our men are satisfied.

We regard those contracts as binding upon the Company and those who signed them. We shall observe them faithfully and we shall stand by those who entered into them.

Interborough Rapid Transit Co.

Theodore P. Shouts

President.